***Press* Release**

The Meteorological Office

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MET. OFFICE ONE STEP AHEAD OF THE WEATHER

The Met. Office has commissioned a study to investigate the impact of severe weather on peoples lives. The aim of the study is to enable individuals and emergency planners to be better prepared for severe weather events, such as the 1998 Boxing Day storms.

The effects of severe weather can be costly, both in terms of human life and damage to property. As part of the National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS), a service designed to give emergency authorities and the public the best possible advice regarding impending severe weather, the study will seek to draw a link between weather and its impact on communities, infrastructure and communications. This will enable The Met. Office to provide better guidance with its warnings.

Stewart Wass, Head of Government Business at The Met. Office, said: 'The Met. Office is developing a system that will give people a clear concept of impending severe weather, and its likely impact on everyday activities. The impact study will investigate creating a measurement system or index, which could be similar to the Richter scale and easily understood. This would be of significant benefit to emergency services, local authorities and the public at large in preparing for severe weather.'

The study will be conducted by a consortium lead by Posford Duviver Consulting Engineers. The other members of the consortium include ADAS Consulting, specialists in land-based consultancy, and Dr John Chatterton, one of the country's leading experts on cost benefit analysis.

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